

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently amended) A stereoscopic image processing apparatus for calculating a parallax between a pair of images, comprising:

correlation evaluating means for evaluating a correlation of brightness between a first pixel block provided in one of said pair of images and a second pixel block provided in the other of said pair of images; and

region size changing ~~over~~ means for changing ~~over~~ a size of said first and second pixel blocks ~~for in-evaluating~~ said correlation evaluating means.

Claim 2. (Currently amended) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said size of said first and second pixel blocks is changed ~~over~~ in accordance with an area where said first pixel block is located.

Claim 3. (Original) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said area is divided into two areas, an upper area and a lower area, by a horizontal boundary line.

Claim 4. (Currently amended) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said size of said first and second pixel blocks is changed ~~over~~ to said first size when said first pixel block is located in said lower area.

Claim 5. (Currently amended) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said area is divided into a plurality of areas and said size of said first and second pixel blocks is changed ~~over~~ to respective specified size of said first pixel block in accordance with said respective areas where said first pixel block is located.

Claim 6. (Original) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first and second pixel blocks have a first size and a second size which is larger than said first size.

Claim 7. (Currently amended) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according

to claim 1, wherein said size of said first and second pixel blocks is changed ~~over~~ in accordance with imaging conditions including ~~at least~~ rain, fog, snow, backlight, nighttime, snow on road, stain or droplet on front windshield.

Claim 8. (Currently amended) A stereoscopic image processing apparatus for calculating a parallax between a pair of images, comprising:

correlation evaluating means for evaluating a correlation of brightness between a first pixel block provided in one of said pair of images and a second pixel block provided in the other of said pair of images;

weighting factor means for applying weighting a factor to each of pixel constituting said first and second pixel blocks in evaluating said correlation; and

weighting factor changing ~~over~~ means for changing ~~over~~ said weighting factor for in evaluating said correlation evaluating means.

Claim 9. (Original) The stereoscopic image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said weight factor is established to 0 at a surrounding region around a central region of said first and second pixel blocks.

Claim 10. (Currently amended) A stereoscopic image processing method of calculating a parallax between a pair of images, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

evaluating a correlation of brightness between a first pixel block provided in one of said pair of images and a second pixel block provided in the other of said pair of images; and

changing ~~over~~ a size of said first and second pixel blocks.

Claim 11. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein ~~the step of~~ changing ~~over~~ said first and second pixel blocks includes changing ~~over~~ in accordance with an area where said first pixel block is located.

Claim 12. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 11, further comprising ~~the step of~~ dividing said area into two areas, an upper area and a lower area, by a horizontal boundary line.

Claim 13. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 11, further comprising ~~the step of~~ dividing said area into a plurality of areas by a plurality of boundary lines.

Claim 14. (Currently amended) A stereoscopic image processing method of calculating a parallax between a pair of images, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

evaluating a correlation of brightness between a first pixel block provided in one of said pair of images and a second pixel block ~~provided~~ in the other of said pair of images;
applying a weighting factor to each of pixel constituting said first and second pixel blocks ~~for said~~ in evaluating said correlation; and
changing ~~over~~ said weighting factor for said in evaluating said correlation.

Claim 15. (New) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a parallax calculating means for calculating the parallax between the pair of images based upon the correlation of brightness.

Claim 16. (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the region size changing means changes a size of the first and second pixel blocks based upon the location of one of the first and second pixel blocks within a corresponding one of the pair of images.

Claim 17. (New) The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the region size changing means changes a size of the first and second pixel blocks based upon the location of one of the first and second pixel blocks within a corresponding one of the pair of images with respect to a horizontal line in said corresponding one of the pair of images.

Claim 18. (New) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the region size changing means changes a size of the first and second pixel blocks such that said size of said first and second pixel blocks is larger above the horizontal line and smaller below the horizontal line.